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AUTHOR Pell, Claiborne
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ABSTRACT

Senator Pell offers his views on the effect of the new administration on the education budget, the need for a large education budget, the need to simplify the administrative procedures used in operating federal programs in the schools, and the effects of various pieces of legislation on education. (IRT)

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS - February 26, 1977

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you.

This is an interesting time to consider the future for education. This year, we have a new Congress, a new Administration, and, for the first time in eight years, educators are looking ahead. Two or three weeks ago, I would have said that educators are looking ahead with total confidence. Optimism would have been the word I would have used then. Now, however, we are dealing with something different.

The new Administration has decided that the government will have a balanced budget, perhaps even within four years. Just as importantly - the Carter Administration has emphasized the need for a thorough re-examination of all Federal programs. The zero-based budgeting and sunset legislation approaches which were emphasized strongly in the National Campaign have become the order of the day.

Two or three weeks ago, we were all thinking that a Democratic Congress and a Democratic President would bring new money into all of the old programs. We did not get all of that wish. Congress wants to spend more money on education and stimulate the economy. The President, on the other hand, has said that what we should do first is to examine whether or not those old programs work at all. In other words, none of our old assumptions has been taken for granted.

Considering the specifics of the Carter budget there are many things that I am pleased with and there are also some things that I am not so pleased with. First of all, there is a good increase of $350 million in Title I money and there is another good increase in the Basic Grant program authorization. Other programs which will benefit are the Bilingual, Emergency School Aid, Right to Read, and

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Follow Through programs. There are also a number of other small increases.

During the past two weeks we heard a number of rumors concerning the education budget, most of which seemed to indicate that there were very low funding levels in store for us, and the budget that was presented is a distinct improvement over what we heard. Altogether President Carter has added 1.4 billion dollars to education's till which is a fairly good first step.

What I am specifically concerned about though are the figures in two programs, Impact Aid and Direct Loans. There are a number of school districts that continue to depend upon Impact Aid and I am not eager to cut that support out from under them. As far as the loan programs are concerned, I don't think that the President's position has covered the need of the classes of students who depend upon low interest student loans. These are the middle-income students. The justification for the reductions was that the need would be accounted for elsewhere - by the Basic Grants for instance - but I don't think that is so. It seems to me to be a bit of wishful thinking.

In general, and this is my real concern, I am wondering if the increases that we see are really up to the level of funding needed by schools and universities to maintain current services. Education, because of its labor intensive nature, is especially sensitive to the current round of inflation and unemployment. At the same time that the cost of providing educational servies is rising the ability of parents and taxpayers to pay for those services is declining. Private schools are hurting simply because fewer people can pay high tuition costs. Public schools are equally troubled because local

support of schools, which we long took for granted, is faltering and Federal support has been held down. Thus, though President Carter says that his request is sufficient, in many cases I am not sure that this is so. I am waiting now to hear from school administrators, professors, and educators from all fields about the specific figures in the new budget that pertain to them. I think my judgment will be confirmed.

I hope then that before more tension builds we can convince the President that the educational sector should be regarded as a high priority item on the budget. We must say this not simply because we are educators or because we work in the field, but because we know that the national recovery and growth depends upon new talent and new ideas, and those things must come from education.

I have long been an advocate of stronger Federal funding for our schools and universities. I have been especially vigorous in supporting increases for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and for the Basic Grants in the Higher Education Act. I'm glad that the President supported these measures. These programs are popular, and they are doing an excellent job by bringing the skills of disadvantaged children up to the level of their contemporaries and by opening the doors of postsecondary education for all. I will continue to push for increases in these programs. That is a position which will never change.

My support for a larger budget for education, though, comes from many other sources as well. Education, as a part of the national economy, has been growing by leaps and bounds in the past few years. Though there may be fewer students attending in the

traditional elementary, secondary, and postsecondary pattern, there are more non-traditional students than ever before. This growth has been so strong that the percentage of the Gross National Product produced by education has grown markedly. That figure is now 8 percent. The Federal government should support that trend, and it should recognize its importance with more funds.

Another reason I am quick to support the education budget is that educators have spent eight years under attack. Simply put, the education budget is one of the few areas where Federal expenditures are discretionary and not obligated. As a result, the Administration has always looked to us when it wanted to cut money. We have been in the trenches for eight years, faced with administrations that have not advanced one new idea, one new program, nor one constructive alternative. It has taken all we have to keep our ideas and our work alive.

It has been a hard and contentious time for us all, but now the hard time is over and we can make up for lost ground.

That is the strongest reason why I am not entirely satisfied with the Carter budget. At best the White House recommendations keep up our operations on the level that they have been. My recommendation will be that more funds will be necessary because it isn't enough to have merely sufficient funding.

Our job, in this regard, will be a little easier now. In the past few years there were wide differences in philosophy between the President and Congress that produced those enormous battles over money. Now we have a friendly administration and many of the differences are gone. The points we will debate are matters of style: whether to emphasize new programs or to concentrate on

improving the old bureaucracy, or whether education needs more money all around. This year we are going to debate over a few programs. We are going to be specific. In the past it was all we could do to hold on, and the contention was unpleasant. I am pleased at the thought - for the first time in many years - of working with the White House in some harmony over expenditure levels.

One more general point that we will have to consider in the next two years, and which I have only touched upon lightly so far, is program administration. Right now we are almost totally concerned about money, but in the long run administration is just as important a consideration. In eight years, education has changed greatly and, as much as I have fought for them, I do not think that all the old ideas and all the old solutions will work as well as they used to. It is time for some change, and to the extent that President Carter wants to review our old programs, I am with him. The President dropped the idea of instituting block grants, but there may be some other initiatives we can take. I'm open to ideas. My intention in asking for this review is not to cut funds from any program, but rather we should consider which programs are still producing strongly and which have bogged down. This is one of the points I will raise in hearings this summer, and that is how we will move ahead.

The plain fact that demands this reassessment is the weight of the bureaucracy which many of you feel. Schools and colleges across the country must handle an incredible number of requirements in order to qualify for Federal aid. In many cases, administrative expenses almost cost more than the grants received. This is the result of a trend I have seen which has produced more and more complicated laws. It is an unreasonable development and we must reverse it.

I am constantly appalled by the overwhelming amount of paperwork which seems to be required so that schools may participate in Federal programs. Witnesses before my Subcommittee on Education have stacked documents involved in a single program in a pile several feet high. I seriously question whether anyone has the time--or the interest--to read all of this paper. I also question whether school officials should be required to put in their valuable time filling out forms which go unread.

The problem is not limited to education. It has been estimated that the amount of paper flowing into Federal agencies each year fills 4½ million cubic feet of space. Federal paperwork management costs more than $8 billion annually. The Federal bureaucracy generates more than two billion pieces of paper per year--the equivalent of ten forms per person--man, woman, and child--in the United States.

We took a small first step in dealing with the paperwork problem in education in the 1976 Amendments. The law now requires coordination of data requests of the Education Division and the Office for Civil Rights, and justification of information collected. In addition, the agency seeking to collect information must estimate the man-hours which will be consumed at State and local levels in filling out the form. Schools and colleges which will have to provide information are given 30 days to comment on the proposed form, before it goes to the Office of Management and Budget for final approval.

As we consider elementary and secondary education legislation in this Congress, the paperwork issue is one on which we will continue to focus. I would welcome your suggestions on additional ways that we can address the problem, so that educators can concentrate on educating children, not pushing paper.

I am an advocate of simple English and plain sense just as much as I am an advocate of greater aid to education. Because of that, I see a great deal of merit in the President's idea of rigorously examining the administration of these programs. I would have hoped that he could have expressed his ideas in a more positive fashion all around and I wish he might have asked us to simplify the laws without cutting down some programs wholesale. His action, though, does not release use from our duty to completely re-examine every part of the law.

We must consider the alternatives. We must decide if all that is needed to cure our woes is money or if our proposed solutions will not work until we learn to administer them well. Even more, we must consider how we have grown in the past years. We must answer the question of relevance. We must make sure that we are still meeting the real needs of the country and not meeting false desires of our own making.

Everybody knows the quote "My country, right or wrong." I think that many educators spend too much time looking out for their own jobs, right or wrong. They have forgotten what our work is all about. Originally, as written by Carl Schurz, that quote was "My country, right or wrong. When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right." There is much that has gone wrong with education and it is time for us to put things right. It is time to stop taking the old ways for granted.

I'm very interested in the ideas being advanced concerning program simplification and consolidation. I'm also looking forward to simplifying the laws, rules, and regulations under which we operate. Two years ago when we were beginning consideration of the

Higher Education Act I spoke before a group of educators in Atlanta, and I was talking, much as I am now, about Federal programs and paperwork. My conclusion then was "simplest is best."

That is my conclusion again, and that will be my resolve as we move through the process of writing a new law. As much as we succeed in cutting away the time and money we spend on paper and administration then the more money will get down to the classroom level. Then we will have truly succeeded.

We have had such a hard time in the last few years, and we have so many expectations now that we have really forgotten to look critically at ourselves. That is something which I hope we will do now. In the first months of this Congress, we have some small bills to attend to--the Library Services Act, and my initiative on energy conservation in schools.

I want to take a moment to discuss my energy bill, which is called the "Emergency Educational Assistance Act." Your organization provided invaluable assistance in the work that went into preparing this bill, and I want to thank you for that assistance. As you know, our educational system has been particularly hard hit by this year's energy crisis. What used to be a minor item in school budgets, the cost of energy, has escalated to the point where schools are seeing more and more of their budget dollars being used to pay energy costs.

We have to come to grips with the problems the energy crisis is causing our schools. Education consumes 11 percent of all energy generated in the United States. By solving education's energy problems, we will be going a long way toward solving our entire nation's energy problems.

As educated people, there are some common sense measures we can pursue. We can turn off unneeded lighting; we can voluntarily keep our thermostats at lower levels. We can, as the President has suggested, get used to lower temperatures in our homes and workplaces. And, we can apply our collective intelligence in a manner that makes good sense. Recently I introduced S. 748, a bill which would require that buildings financed with Federal funds be designed and constructed in such a way that the windows can be opened and closed manually. I realize that such a bill should be unnecessary. Yet, we seem to have progressed to the point where we construct buildings whose windows do not open. Such buildings represent a great waste of energy resources, because on those days when it would be feasible to open the windows and make rooms comfortable, air conditioners have to be used because the windows cannot be opened. Energy use for air-conditioning now consumes 3 percent of the total energy used in this country each year, and it is growing at the rapid rate of 15 percent each year. So, a bill like S. 748 is necessary to get us back to a common sense approach to the way we live.

Yet, common sense alone will not suffice. Our energy problems, particularly in our schools, will not be solved without some financial assistance from the Federal Government. Such assistance must be provided our educational community in its efforts to cope with the energy crisis. My bill, S. 701, will provide that much needed assistance. And while we provide assistance, we must emphasize energy conservation. S. 701 is based on those twin principles.

I think S. 701 is a vital first step in attempting to solve the problems the energy crisis is presenting our schools. Your organization has played a major role in preparing this legislation.

I look forward to your continued support and assistance in moving for this bill's favorable consideration by Congress this year.

This summer we will begin considering the laws concerning elementary and secondary education. A bill on that will probably be enacted next year. In all these measures, we have a chance to reconsider the Federal presence. We should also consider the nature of the State and local presence as it affects classroom activities. The bureaucratic structure should be trimmed at all levels. So then, in this Congress we shall examine the programs we run. We shall take time to see if the dollars we spend get right to the students or if they do not. In my mind, that is one of the two best measures of a program. The other measure is relevance which is simply: Does the result do good?

We should apply these measures to all of our work.

Just the other day, I introduced the bill to reauthorize Federal aid to libraries. There is a National Commission on libraries whose members are working towards a White House Conference, and they sent me a copy of their annual report. I would like to share a small portion of that report with you. It says a great deal about our work. They were talking about equal opportunity and they said: "We must eventually provide every individual in the United States with equal opportunity of access to that part of our total knowledge and resources, which will satisfy the individuals educational, working, cultural, and leisure-time needs and interests, regardless of the individual's location, social or physical condition or level of intellectual achievement."

That is what our work is all about.

Through all the struggles we have had or will have this is the end we must keep in mind. I think the laws we have to reach this goal are basically good, and that with a little extra money, we can go a long way. So, my concern in this Congress won't be with drastic changes or dramatic new programs, but with making sure that the old programs work.

Thomas Wolfe wrote: "To every man his chance. To every man, regardless of his birth, his shining golden opportunity. To every man the right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever his manhood and vision can contribute to make."

This is the scope and purpose of all our work. For higher education, for high school, and elementary school it is the same.

In the coming years I hope we can frame our debate about the law in that context. If we do, then we will move closer to our goal, and our work, our schools; and our children will be the better for it.